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VASCO DA GAMA
FERDINAND MAGELLAN
JACQUES CARTIER
MUNGO PARK
RICHARD BURTON
ROALD AMUNDSEN

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By John Walton

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VASCO DA GAMA

ON a hot July morning in 1497, four ships lay moored in the mouth of the river Tagus in Portugal. Their crews were all on board and they were carrying enough stores to last many months, for they were about to set sail on the first voyage to India. On the muddy banks of the river a vast crowd waited bare-headed in the blazing sun, and watched a solemn procession slowly make its way from a chapel nearby to the landing-place. First came a tall sea-captain named Vasco da Gama and behind him three others, all carrying lighted candles. Next came priests in splendid vestments and plainly robed friars chanting a litany. When the procession reached the landing-place all knelt while a priest prayed for those about to set sail and blessed them and their ships. Then the last farewells were said, and Vasco da Gama and his fellow captains were rowed out to their ships.

Soon afterwards the little fleet weighed anchor and slowly disappeared down river and out to sea. With pennants flying and their swelling sails bearing the great red cross of the Order of Christ they were a grand sight. The flagship, commanded by Vasco da Gama himself, was the *San Gabriel*; his brother Paul was in command of the *San Raphael*.

With their high sterns and forecastles, these ships might seem too frail for such an arduous voyage, but they were soundly built and their captains were sure of the course they had to follow.

For over half a century Portuguese seamen had been exploring the west coast of Africa, always pushing farther and farther south. At first they dared not go far out of sight of land, but the Portuguese were born sailors and shipbuilders, and they soon became bolder. Portugal has such a long coastline and so many good harbours that it was as natural for the Portuguese to earn their living on the sea as it was for the British. Many years before Vasco da Gama's time they turned their frail fishing vessels into sturdy ships which could withstand the strong Atlantic gales and seas. These ships were called caravels—the fastest ships of their time. They usually had three masts fitted with triangular or 'lateen' sails, and their stern and forecastle were much higher than their waist. Though they were no bigger than modern coastal fishing boats, these were the ships in which men like Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus crossed the oceans.

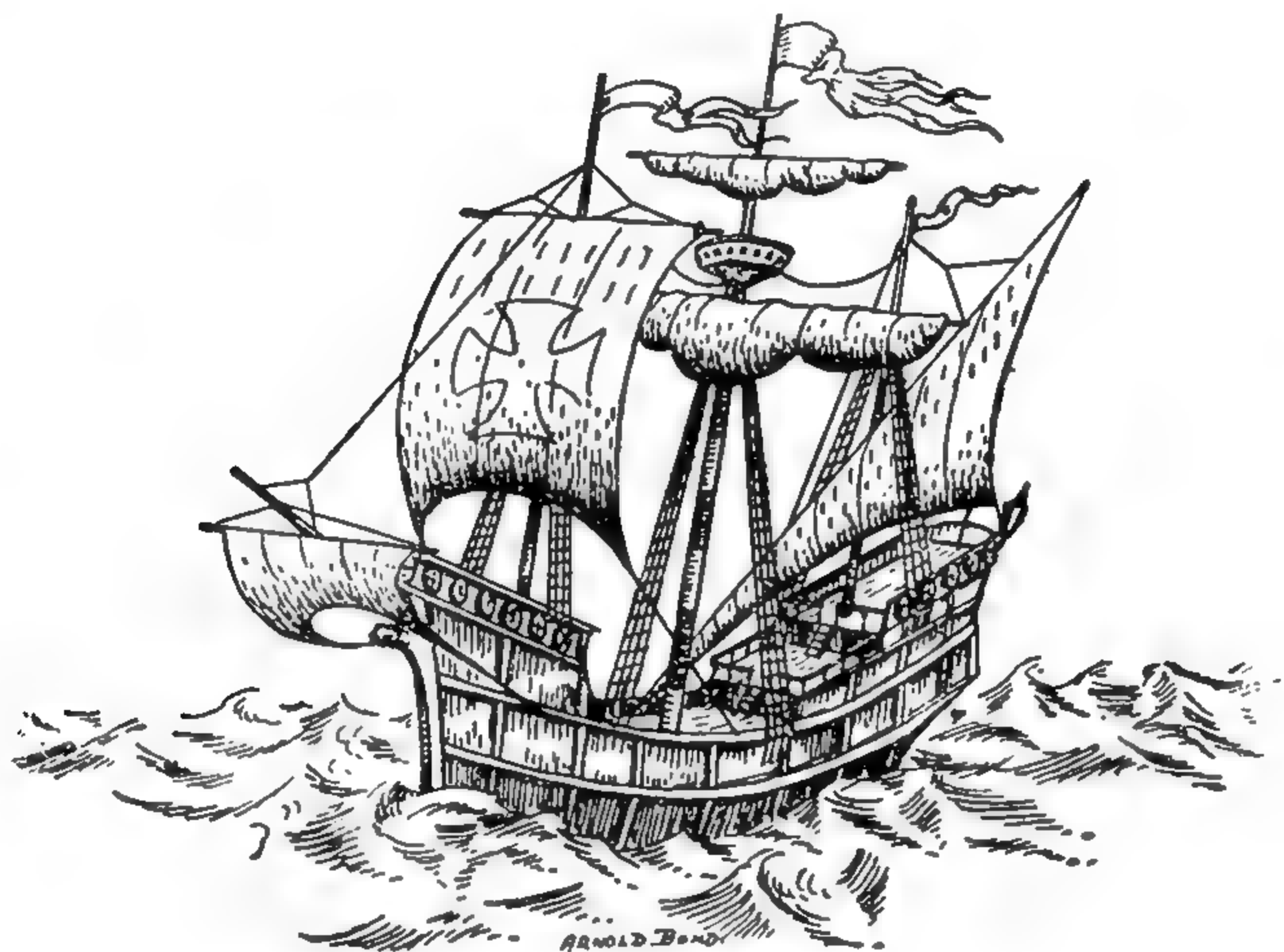
Do not suppose that these explorers only desired to add to men's knowledge of the world or that they merely loved adventure for its own sake. Only the boldest of men would attempt such voyages, and they were attracted by far more glittering prizes than the thrill of discovering new lands. Ever since the Portuguese

first reached Ceuta in Morocco at the beginning of the fifteenth century, they planned voyage after voyage with one aim in view : to reach India by sailing round Africa. At that time the only route to India lay across Asia, and that was strongly guarded by the Turks and Egyptians, who were Mohammedans and sworn enemies of Christendom. Rich goods came to Europe by this route : spices with which men loved to flavour their food ; silks and muslins ; gold and precious stones. And the Mohammedans made Europe pay high prices for these coveted goods. If, the Portuguese argued, they could find a sea route to India they could bring back shiploads of such goods and nobody could stop them. Very soon they would be the richest country in Europe. At the same time they would be able to strike a heavy blow at the Turks, who were then threatening to invade Europe and who had actually succeeded in capturing Constantinople in 1453. It would be easy to send Christian missionaries and armies to convert the people of the East.

So year after year the caravels sailed down the Tagus, and crept slowly down the coast of Africa. By 1434 they had rounded Cape Bojador, and ten years later they discovered the Cape Verde Islands. Most of these expeditions were planned by Prince Henry the Navigator, son of King John of Portugal. He never went to sea himself, but lived alone on Cape St. Vincent in southern Portugal. He collected

information from explorers who visited him and from books and maps which were sent to him from all parts of Europe, and encouraged his captains to make longer and longer voyages.

It was not till some years after the death of Prince



A CARAVEL

Henry the Navigator that the Portuguese found themselves in sight of the sea route to India. When Bartholomew Diaz sailed from Lisbon in 1487 explorers had already sailed beyond the mouth of the river Congo, and now in a great effort Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reached Mossel Bay. By his voyage he had proved that this was a possible route to India, though a stormy one, for many men had been full of doubts.

After this triumph years passed before another ship left Portugal for India. Then came the voyages of Christopher Columbus on behalf of the King of Spain, and the King of Portugal decided to send another expedition. This time there was to be no turning back before India was reached.

When he was chosen by the king to lead the new expedition Vasco da Gama was 36 years of age, and he was already an experienced navigator. He was known for his courage, pride and iron will. There was no doubt that he would either succeed in reaching India or never return alive. Such was the man who set his little fleet on the course for the Cape Verde Islands in July 1497.

No sooner had the fleet left the Cape Verde Islands than it ran into a violent tropical storm. Rather than turn back or be blown aground, Vasco da Gama decided to steer due south into mid-Atlantic, leaving the usual course along the African coast. For three months they sailed across the unknown ocean before they caught a glimpse of land. When the fleet was barely 600 miles from the coast of Brazil, Da Gama steered south-east until St Helena Bay in South Africa was reached. Here they landed and went in search of fresh supplies of food and water. Here, too, they first met Hottentots, with whom they had a lively skirmish.

Soon they put to sea again and sailed on down the coast. In a few days they came in sight of the Cape

of Good Hope. They were more fortunate than Bartholomew Diaz and his men, for the sea was



A REED-PIPE

fairly calm and they were favoured with a following wind for the dreaded passage. In three days they anchored in Mossel Bay, where they met more Hottentots, from whom they obtained an ox in exchange for three ivory bracelets.

The Hottentots entertained them with dancing to tunes which they played on reed-pipes. In their turn the Portuguese also danced, accompanied by hornpipes, and Vasco da Gama joined in.

Weighing anchor once more, the little fleet soon passed the crosses set up ten years before to mark the farthest point reached by Diaz. Now they were in seas never before sailed by white men. On Christmas Day they saw a new land, to which they gave the name Natal, because it was discovered on the Natal Day (or birthday) of Christ. Hoping to avoid the strong currents of this part of the Indian Ocean, Da Gama next set course for the open sea,



A HORNPIPE

but soon shortage of food and water forced him to seek another harbour. At the beginning of 1498 the little fleet dropped anchor at the mouth of the river Limpopo in the country which is still Portuguese East Africa. Here they met a different race of natives, the Bantu, who made their unexpected visitors very welcome and gave them plenty of food and water.

Continuing northward, they rounded Cape Correntes and at length reached the mouth of the Quilimane river, where they stayed for a month to clean and repair their battered ships. They then sailed on till they came to Mozambique, where they met four Arab ships carrying gold, silver, cloves, pepper, ginger, pearls and rubies. Here they were told that farther on spices and precious stones were so plentiful that they would be able to carry away as many basket-loads as they wanted. They were also told that there were Christians living on shore and that far away on the mainland lived the great Christian king Prester John. All this turned out to be untrue, but the news was so welcome to the Portuguese that many of them wept for joy.

But when the Arabs learned that the newcomers were Christians, the enemies of their Faith, they refused to permit them to land. The fleet turned north again until they reached Mombasa, where again they were treated as enemies. For the Arabs were well aware that the Portuguese had come not merely as enemies of their Faith but as rivals in trade. A bold attempt was made at midnight to seize the

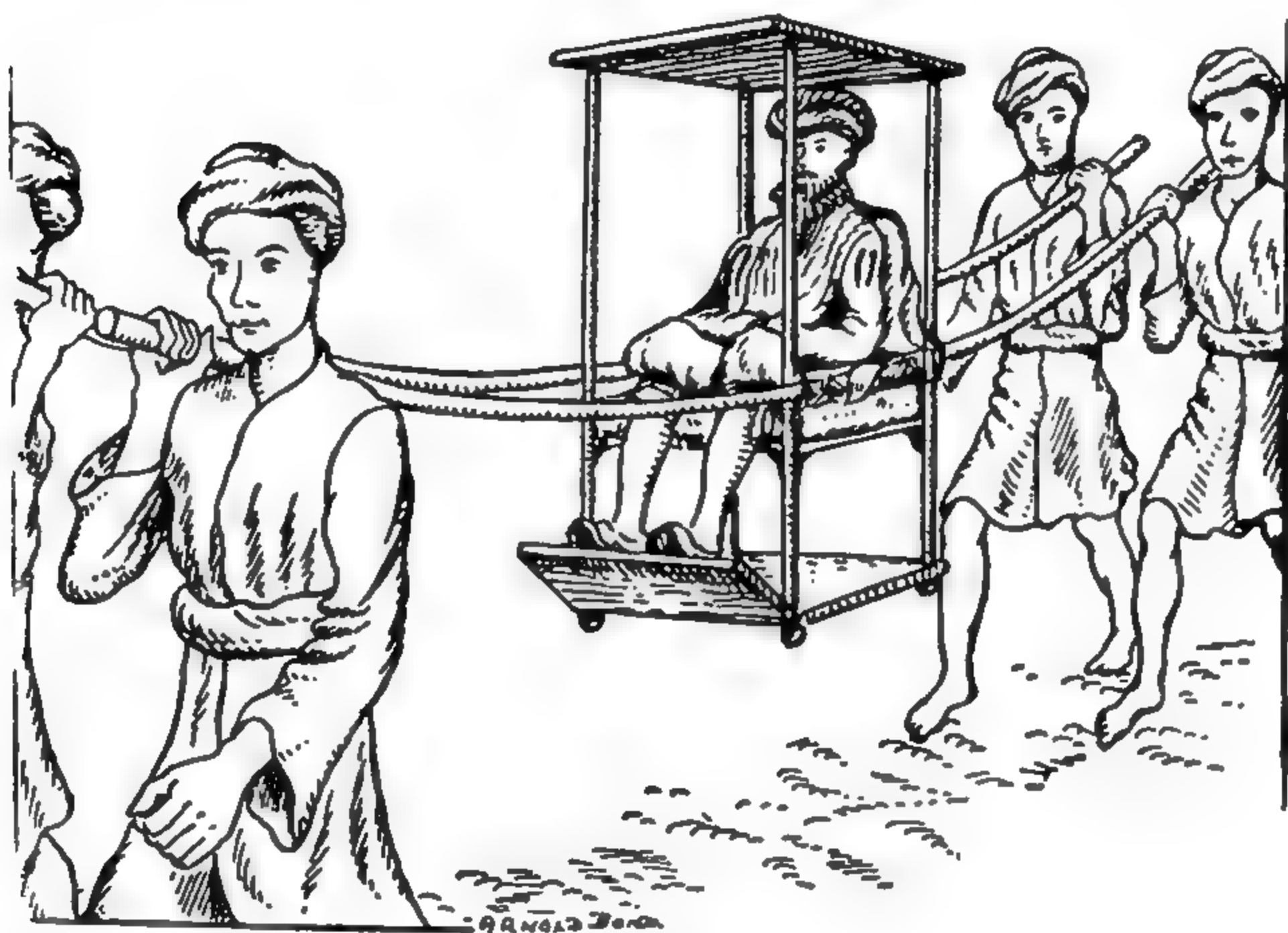
Portuguese ships and murder the crews, but just as armed swimmers were about to cut the anchor cables of the *San Raphael* the alarm was given, and the attackers swam away as fast as they could.

Vasco da Gama was anxious to find a pilot who would guide him across the Indian Ocean to the Malabar coast of India. It was clear that there was no help to be had at Mombasa, and he ordered the fleet to continue sailing northward. At last they came to the little port of Malindi, where the native ruler proved to be very friendly. Here they rested nine days, exchanging gifts with the ruler and joining in festivals and mock battles. At the end of this time the ruler lent them an Indian pilot, and they set sail for Calicut on the coast of India.

Twenty-three days after leaving Malindi, the look-out men signalled land ahead. Eagerly the weather-beaten crews, who had now been at sea for more than ten months, crowded on deck to catch their first glimpse of India. Far away they could just see the outlines of the high mountains which run down the west coast of India. On 23rd May, 1498, Vasco da Gama brought his fleet to anchor off Calicut.

At first they were not made very welcome. As soon as they landed they were greeted with the words : 'The devil take you ! What brought you here ?' To this they promptly replied : 'Christians and spices.' The Portuguese had been led to believe that they would find Christians in India, and

it was some time before they found out that the Hindus were not Christians like themselves. Spices and precious stones, they soon discovered, were very plentiful—as long as they could pay for them. Unfortunately the goods which the Portuguese had



A PALANQUIN

taken so much trouble to bring were of very little value to the Indians.

Soon after Vasco da Gama arrived at Calicut he was summoned to appear before the ruler of the port. He and his captains were escorted through the city in palanquins attended by guards who marched to the strains of drums and trumpets and bagpipes. The whole population turned out to see the strange white men from across the sea. When they came

into the presence of the ruler they saw him lying on a green velvet couch under a gilt canopy. Vasco da Gama told him of the might of the King of Portugal, and in reply the ruler of Calicut said he would regard the King as his brother and that his ambassadors were welcome. But when Vasco da Gama presented as gifts from his King a few casks of oil and strings of coral he was laughed at. Such things were trifles, he was told, and if his King desired spices and precious stones he must send gold.

The Arab traders who lived in Calicut tried to make trouble for the Portuguese whom they rightly suspected of trying to seize their trade. But the ruler remained friendly in spite of the poor gifts brought by the Portuguese, and he gave Vasco da Gama a letter for the King of Portugal, which was written with an iron pen on a palm leaf, and said : ‘ Vasco da Gama, a gentleman of your court, visited my country, which pleased me very much. My country is rich in cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper, and precious stones. In exchange for these things I ask you to send us gold, silver, corals, and scarlet cloth.’

Promising to return soon with shiploads of these things, Vasco da Gama set sail for Portugal. The fleet suffered terribly on the return voyage. After leaving Calicut in August they did not reach Malindi until January 1499, having been delayed by calm weather and contrary winds. Many of the

crew fell sick and only a few men were fit enough to work the ships. So many died that the *San Raphael* had to be left and set on fire at Mozambique, because there were not enough men left to work her. The remaining ships struggled on round the Cape and at last reached Lisbon in September 1499. Out of the 170 men who had embarked nearly two years before, only fifty-five came back. But they had done what they had set out to do : they had found a sea route to India.

As a result of this wonderful voyage the Portuguese were able to seize the rich trade with the Far East and to build a vast empire thousands of miles from their own land.

Vasco da Gama made a second voyage to India in 1502 with a fleet of fifteen ships. He was granted the title of Admiral of India and a magnificent pension in reward for his services, and now he was returning to India to display the might of Portugal. Twice he bombarded Calicut mercilessly and looted Cochin and Cannanore, sinking and burning every Mohammedan ship he could catch. When he sailed for home with a vast load of spices and jewels he was greatly feared and hated.

It was more than twenty years before Vasco da Gama, who was by now one of the richest men in Portugal, returned to India. This time he went as Viceroy of India to rule the Portuguese territories there. Though an old man he made a name for himself as a stern but just ruler. But the climate

was too much for a man of his years, and he died at Cochin on 24th December, 1524.

Vasco da Gama was typical of the age he lived in. He did not hesitate to burn and torture men and women who did not share his religion, but he willingly shared danger and hardships with his men, and he astonished the Indians by refusing to accept any kind of bribe. His cruelty is best forgotten when we remember that he forged the first link between East and West.

FERDINAND MAGELLAN

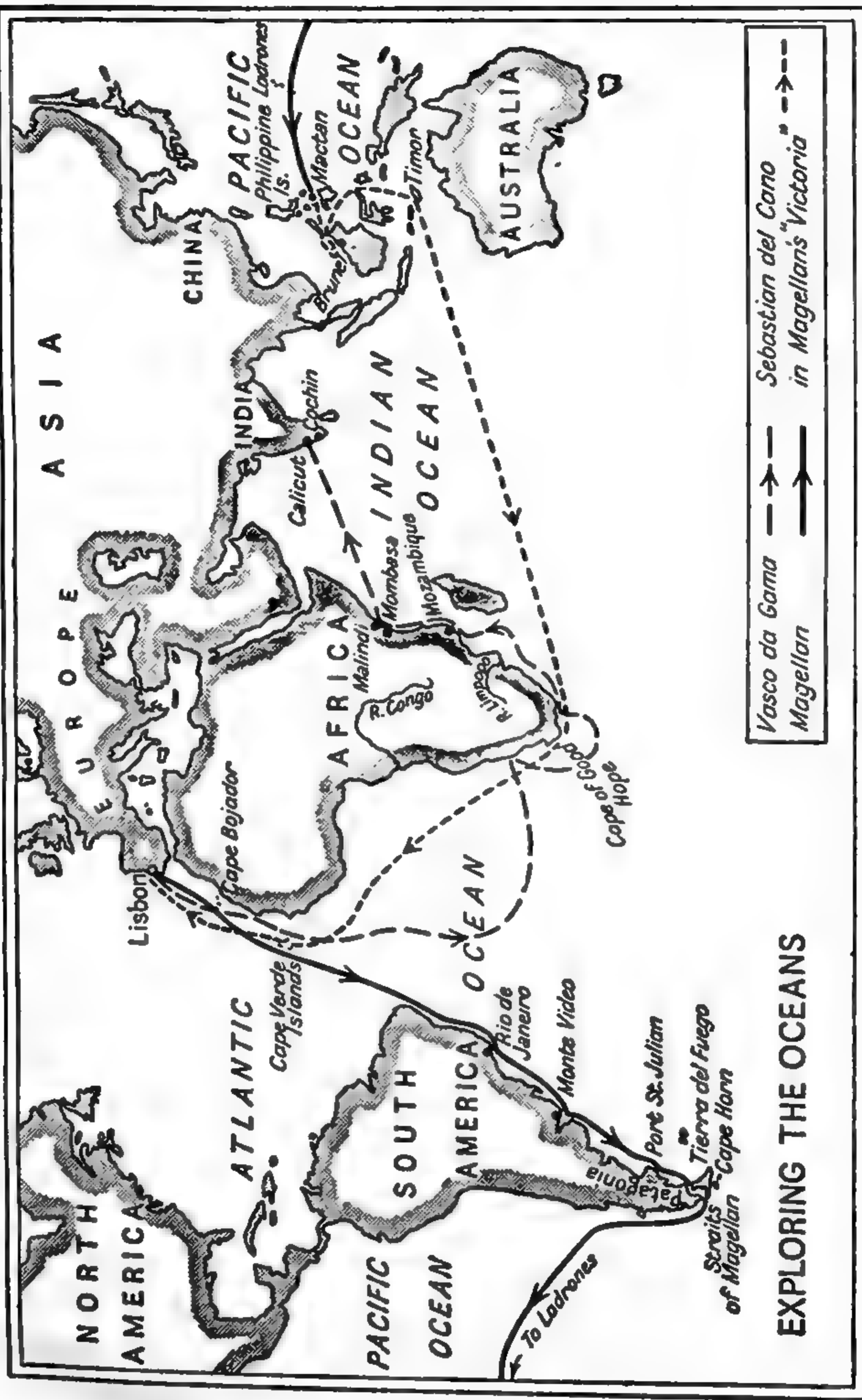
EARLY on the morning of 8th September, 1522, a small ship sailed slowly up river to Seville and fired her guns in salute. As she approached her anchorage crowds gathered to stare at her and cheer excitedly, for she was the *Victoria*, one of the five ships with which Ferdinand Magellan had sailed away in search of a passage to the Indies nearly three years before. Since that day in 1519 not a word had been heard of Magellan or his ships.

Eighteen men stumbled ashore from the *Victoria*, eighteen weary, half-starved, ragged sailors, and no more. Out of the 265 men who sailed away only these few returned to Seville, and Ferdinand Magellan was not with them. Like so many of the others, he had lost his life before the voyage was ended. But what a story the survivors had to tell! They were the first men to sail round the world. They were the first men to find a passage from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. They were the first to sail across the Pacific Ocean and land in the Philippine Islands. After all the terrible hardships of the past three years they had returned in triumph, having succeeded in doing what no men had done before them. They had set sail from Seville, sailed in a westerly direction all the time, and had

at last returned to Seville. They had proved beyond all doubt or argument that the world was round.

The captain of the *Victoria* was Sebastian del Cano, a Basque nobleman, and at first it was he who received all the honour and glory of this successful voyage. The Emperor Charles V rewarded him with a Spanish knighthood and a pension of five hundred gold ducats. For the time being Ferdinand Magellan was forgotten. Yet it was Magellan who first planned the voyage, who persuaded the same Emperor to give him ships and money to carry out his plans, and who kept the ships sailing constantly westward when nearly all his men wished to give up and return home. In the first few months of the voyage Sebastian del Cano had been one of those who complained and mutinied, but now he claimed the rewards while Ferdinand Magellan lay in an unknown grave far away in the Philippines.

Of those who returned with the *Victoria*, one man, an Italian named Antonio Pigafetta, had not forgotten Magellan and was angry that in the hour of triumph his name was not remembered. All through that long and wearying voyage Pigafetta faithfully kept a journal in which he wrote down everything they did and saw. As soon as he returned to Italy he had this journal printed and published, so that now everyone remembers that the explorer who planned and carried out the first voyage round the world was Ferdinand Magellan.



Magellan was born in Portugal about the year 1480. He was of noble birth, and in his boyhood he was a page at the court of Queen Eleanor. As a young man he fought with the Portuguese armies in the East Indies and the Malaccas, where he was wounded. He was a man who loved adventure and voyages of exploration, and it was while he was in the Far East that he first thought of sailing round the world.

Magellan grew up in an age of discovery. Sailors of his own country, Portugal, had taken the lead in searching for new routes to India. Helped and encouraged by Prince Henry the Navigator they had slowly explored the west coast of Africa, until at last in 1487 (while Magellan was still a small boy) Bartholomew Diaz succeeded in sailing round the Cape of Good Hope. Ten years later another Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama, reached India by the same route. Following Vasco da Gama came adventurers, merchants, soldiers and statesmen who quickly built up for Portugal a vast and wealthy empire in the East. The trade in spices and precious stones which they brought back from India, Ceylon and the Malaccas made Portuguese merchants the richest in Europe.

Many sailors believed that an easier and shorter route to India and the Spice Islands could be found by sailing westward. Following the lead of Christopher Columbus in 1492 the Spaniards and Portuguese carefully explored the American coastline searching for a passage. One famous Spanish

explorer was wrecked in the Isthmus of Darien and on climbing to the top of a hill saw for the first time the shining waters of the Pacific Ocean. His story only made sailors more eager to reach that ocean, for they were sure that it would only need a few days sailing for them to reach India, China and Japan. Little did they suspect how long and hard such a voyage would be. Some thought a passage would be found in the North-West, while others pointed to the far South.

When Magellan returned to Portugal from the Malaccas he was eager to lead an expedition to find a westward route to the Indies. He believed that somewhere in the South Atlantic Ocean he could find a passage from west to east. He said he had proof that there was such a passage, but he refused to tell anyone what his proof was or how he found it.

At first Magellan offered his services to the King of Portugal, requesting permission to command an expedition to the Indies. But he was not in favour at the Portuguese court and the King firmly refused. It was made clear to Magellan that it was unlikely that the King would ever change his mind.

Magellan was a strong-willed man who refused to give up at the first setback. He resolved to leave Portugal for ever and to offer his services to the King of Spain, the Emperor Charles V.

The Spanish royal councillors were at first suspicious of the Portuguese adventurer who was so sure he could find a new route to the Indies.

They had heard so many claims of that kind, all of which had come to nothing. But Magellan explained his plans so clearly and spoke so convincingly that at last they agreed to help him. No doubt it seemed to them a good chance to seize a share of the rich trade with the East Indies which the Portuguese had claimed for themselves.

Five small ships, all very old and patched-up, were fitted out for Magellan. Rather than leave anything to chance, he saw to every detail of the fitting out and provisioning himself. Before the ships sailed every rotten plank and torn sail had been replaced, and all the woodwork had been repainted. Enough food to last two years was taken on board, as well as quantities of arms and ammunition, rope, sailcloth, planks, tools, candles, drugs and many other articles that might be needed for such a voyage. The greatest difficulty was to find crews for the five ships. Very few men were willing to leave home for a voyage to an unknown destination, and the pay offered was very low. At last 265 men of all nations, Spaniards, Portuguese, Frenchmen and English were persuaded to go.

Everything was ready by 20th September, 1519, and the five little ships set sail from Spain. Magellan's flagship was the biggest, the *Trinidad*, a ship of 110 tons. The other four were the *Concepcion* (90 tons), the *Victoria* (85 tons), the *Santiago* and the *San Antonio* (75 tons). As their sails filled out and the ships got under way they

fired salutes to the land they were leaving. Very soon the coast of Spain had disappeared from view.

Magellan led the way in the *Trinidad*, and he ordered the captains of the other ships to keep his flag always in sight. At night a huge pan holding burning charcoal on the *Trinidad's* stern guided the others, and by means of it Magellan signalled orders to his captains to which they had to reply by signal lights. Every evening at dusk the other ships had to sail alongside the *Trinidad* to salute Magellan and receive his orders for the following day.

All this time he firmly refused to tell any of the captains what his plans were or what course he had chosen. Naturally the captains of the other ships did not like this, and from the first they were discontented. Also, as proud Spaniards, they hated being under the command of a Portuguese captain.

Sailing southwards they followed the well-known course to the Canary Islands and Cape Verde Island and then on to Sierra Leone. After being becalmed for three weeks beneath a broiling sun they picked up a favourable wind which carried them to the coast of Brazil. By this time Magellan had made prisoner one of the Spanish captains whom he suspected of mutiny.

After staying two weeks at Rio de Janeiro to take on board fresh food and water Magellan set his course southward along the coast of Brazil. He was impatient to reach the passage to the

Indies, and now he believed he was getting near it. In January 1520, the look-out men saw a small hill set in a vast plain, and they named the place Monte Video. At this point they came to a great inlet which stretched far away to the west. This was just where Magellan expected to find the passage he was seeking, and he was filled with hope. All the crews were full of joy because they expected that soon they would reach the Spice Islands. Magellan now divided his fleet and sent the *Santiago* and *San Antonio* westwards to explore the inlet, while with the other ships he sailed across its mouth. After a fortnight the two little ships returned with the bitterly disappointing news that the inlet was a huge river. They had discovered the Rio de la Plata.

Hiding his own disappointment, for he had not revealed that he expected to find the passage at this point, Magellan ordered his captains to set course for the south again. Day after day they sailed along the barren coast, in which they could see nothing but penguins and sea-lions. Stubbornly, Magellan refused to admit defeat and ordered his captains to examine every bay and every inlet.

As the little ships struggled slowly southwards, the weather grew colder and colder, and each day was shorter and darker than the day before. Heavy seas battered the ships and hurricanes ripped away the sails and masts. Food was now very scarce, and Magellan put his men on short

rations. Weary, half-frozen and half-starved, the crew began to grumble against their stern captain, but not for one moment did he think of turning back. Either they would find the passage or they would all perish in the attempt.

Three dreadful months passed and at last they came to another inlet. This was Port St Julian, and like all the others it was closed, but here Magellan decided to take shelter till warmer weather returned. On shore there was no sign of life, no wild animals or fresh fruit for food, not even shelter from the biting winds. To the captains and the crews it seemed the bleakest place they had ever seen. Rather than stay there some of them mutinied and seized two of the ships, intending to return to Spain. Swiftly and ruthlessly Magellan attacked and defeated them. The leader of the mutiny was immediately beheaded, while two of his lieutenants were left alone on the shore when the ships put to sea from Port St. Julian. The rest of the mutineers were pardoned, and there was no more trouble.

For nearly five months Magellan's fleet rested in this desolate bay, and all this time they saw no sign of human life on shore. It seemed as if the land were utterly uninhabited. But when spring came and the weather grew warmer, strange men appeared from the hills. At first these men terrified Magellan's crews, because they seemed to be twice the size of ordinary men. In his journal

Antonio Pigafetta described one of them in these words : ‘ So tall was he, that we reached only to his waist-belt. He was well enough made, and had a broad face, which was painted red, with yellow circles round his eyes, and two heart-shaped spots on the cheeks. His hair was short and coloured white, and he was dressed in the skins of an animal cleverly stitched together.’ Magellan called these huge men Patagonians (‘ big feet ’) and their country Patagonia. He ordered one of them to be captured because he wanted to take him back to the King of Spain.

Leaving Port St Julian Magellan’s fleet headed south again. Almost at once the *Santiago* was wrecked in a sudden and violent gust of wind. The rest kept on their way, slowly exploring every bay and inlet, but almost in despair of finding a passage. Day after day they struggled along against strong headwinds, seeing nothing but barren rocky shores. At last they reached a great white cape, beyond which stretched a deep bay. Here they came in sight of steep hills and snow-covered peaks. Soon they realized that they had sailed into a deep channel, and hopes began to rise. Perhaps at last they had found the passage they were looking for. On they sailed through dark and twisting channels. All was silent except for the howling of the wind among the rocky hills and cliffs. They saw no sign of life, not even a tree or shrub. But at night many flickering fires were

visible on the southern shores of the channel. Because of this Magellan called the country Tierra del Fuego (the Land of Fire).

Often the channel forked and they had no means of telling which way they should go. Then Magellan would send a ship to explore each of the channels until one found the right course. When he was sent to explore one of these channels, the pilot of the *San Antonio* seized the chance to desert and return to Spain. Now there were only three ships left to sail on to the end of the passage.

At last came the joyful day when they caught sight of the open sea at the end of that dark and silent channel. They had reached the Pacific Ocean. Even the stern Magellan could not help weeping for joy. The success for which he had worked so hard had come just when he had almost given up all hope.

Now the three little ships were sailing in warmer and calmer seas. For nearly four months they sailed on without meeting a storm, and Magellan called this quiet and peaceful sea the Pacific, that is the peaceful, Ocean. All the sailors expected to reach India quite soon after passing through the Straits of Magellan (as they came to be called), and when no land was sighted after many days they began to despair again. Food ran short, and they were forced to eat sawdust, rats, and leather, and such fish as they could catch. Their supply of fresh water became foul in the heat of the sun, and

there was scarcely enough for each man to have a few sips a day. More than a third of the crews died during this terrible first voyage across the Pacific Ocean.

When even the strongest of the survivors were



AN ARQUEBUS

sick and scarcely had the strength to work the ships, land was sighted. They had reached a group of islands which they called the Ladrões, or islands of thieves. Here they rested, and found fresh food and water. The inhabitants of the islands were naked savages who stole every-

thing they could carry away from the Spanish ships.

After a few days' rest Magellan set sail once more, and in four days reached one of the Philippine Islands. A few days later they landed on Sebu, the largest of the islands, where at first they were made very welcome by the Raja.

Being anxious to display his country's might, Magellan rashly offered to lead a party of his fighting men with bows and arquebuses against the king of Mactan, who was an enemy of the king of Sebu. Unluckily, the warriors of Mactan cleverly dodged the Spaniards' volleys of bullets and arrows, and in the hand-to-hand fight that

followed, they rushed on Magellan and killed him. He died on 27th April, 1521.

As soon as the news of Magellan's death reached the Raja of Sebu he turned against the Spaniards who were forced to leave the Philippines. The *Concepcion* now became so leaky that they had to burn her. Only the *Trinidad* and the *Victoria* remained to continue the voyage. These two ships sailed on to Borneo where they discovered the city which is now called Brunei, and where, as Pigafetta noted in his journal, 'The houses are all of wood, placed on great piles to raise them high up above the water.'

From Borneo they pushed on to Mindanao and then to the Malaccas or Spice Islands, 'for which we gave thanks to God, and to comfort ourselves discharged all our artillery'. After over two years wandering from sea to sea they had reached their destination. But Pigafetta was saddened by the thought that Magellan had not lived to see the triumph of all his plans.

After loading the two ships with spices, they began the long voyage back to Spain. Soon the *Trinidad*, too unseaworthy for such a voyage, put back and was never heard of again. The *Victoria* with sixty men commanded by the Basque nobleman, Sebastian del Cano, one of the men who mutinied against Magellan, set out for Spain alone. After crossing the Indian Ocean and rounding the Cape of Good Hope, the weather-beaten little ship at

last reached the Cape Verde Islands. During the long voyage they suffered almost as badly as they had while crossing the Pacific Ocean. Only eighteen men completed the voyage. As they wearily cast anchor in the river at Seville, they knew that, whatever their captain might boast, all the glory of their triumph would always belong to Ferdinand Magellan. 'He was more constant than anyone else in the greatest of adversity,' wrote Antonio Pigafetta. 'He endured hunger better than all the others, and more accurately than any man in the world did he understand sea charts and navigation.'

JACQUES CARTIER

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS sailed westwards in the hope of finding a new and shorter route to the islands of the East with all their wealth in silk, jewels and spices. Instead, he reached the West Indies and later the American Continent. Later Magellan sailed away to the south-west, and after a long and terrible voyage found a difficult and stormy passage to the Pacific Ocean and the Spice Islands.

This is the story of yet another daring explorer, this time a Frenchman, who hoped to find a passage to the East by sailing westwards. Like many explorers before and since his time, Jacques Cartier argued that if a ship could reach the East Indies by sailing round the southern tip of America, then it should be possible for a ship to sail to the North of America and reach the East Indies. He was quite right, too, but he could not know that such a voyage would be far more difficult than Magellan's. Like Columbus, Cartier failed to find the passage he sought, and also like Columbus he discovered a new land he hardly expected to find. While seeking the East Indies, Cartier found and began to explore the great land we now call Canada.

Historians can tell us very little about Jacques Cartier. Not even a portrait of him has been

preserved. He was a Breton, a native of the seaport of St Malo, and a master pilot. As a young man he made a name for himself as a soldier, and he was popular enough in St Malo for many families to choose him as godfather to their children. At the time of his voyages he was a middle-aged man. He was born about the year 1494.

Jacques Cartier was not only loved by his fellow townsmen. He was well trusted by the king, Francis I, who chose him to lead the expeditions which he had planned. It was the king's purpose to claim part of the New World for France.

For you must not think that Cartier was the first sailor from Europe to land in North America or even the first to cross the North Atlantic Ocean—a much more difficult and dangerous voyage than the more southerly route taken by Columbus in 1492. More than five hundred years earlier a Viking chieftain's son named Leif Ericsson had landed on the coast of North America. About the year A.D. 1000, runs the legend, this Viking chief set sail from Greenland, where the Norsemen had a colony, and sailed southward until he reached a warm and pleasant land which he called Vineland because grapes grew so plentifully there. This may have been Prince Edward Island or even the coast of Massachusetts. Nobody knows. Even the story of the Viking voyages was almost forgotten by the time of Columbus.

Five years after Columbus set sail on his famous

voyage, a Venetian merchant named John Cabot sailed from Bristol with one small ship. Aided by money granted by the King of England, Henry VII, he hoped to find new lands which he promised to claim for the king. With him he took his son Sebastian, and for 51 days they sailed the Atlantic without once seeing land. At last, on 24th June, 1497, they reached the shores of North America, and with the royal banner unfurled they took possession of the land in the name of King Henry VII. On returning to England with stories of the wealth to be found in the New World, Cabot was rewarded with a pension and the title of Great Admiral. Next year he made a second voyage, which was a complete failure, and he returned without having found the wealth he promised. So the king soon forgot him.

Meanwhile Portuguese explorers were sailing up the coast of North America from the south, also in search of new lands and the hoped-for passage to the East. Afraid of being left with no share in the wealth from the New World, Francis I began making plans to seize new lands for France. Already French fishermen had crossed the Atlantic to fish for cod off Newfoundland, and it was not difficult to find sailors eager and ready to go in search of a North-West passage to the Indies.

So on 20th April, 1534, Jacques Cartier, with two small ships manned by 61 men, left St Malo. His orders were to discover islands and countries

where it was said he would find a great quantity of gold and other valuable things.

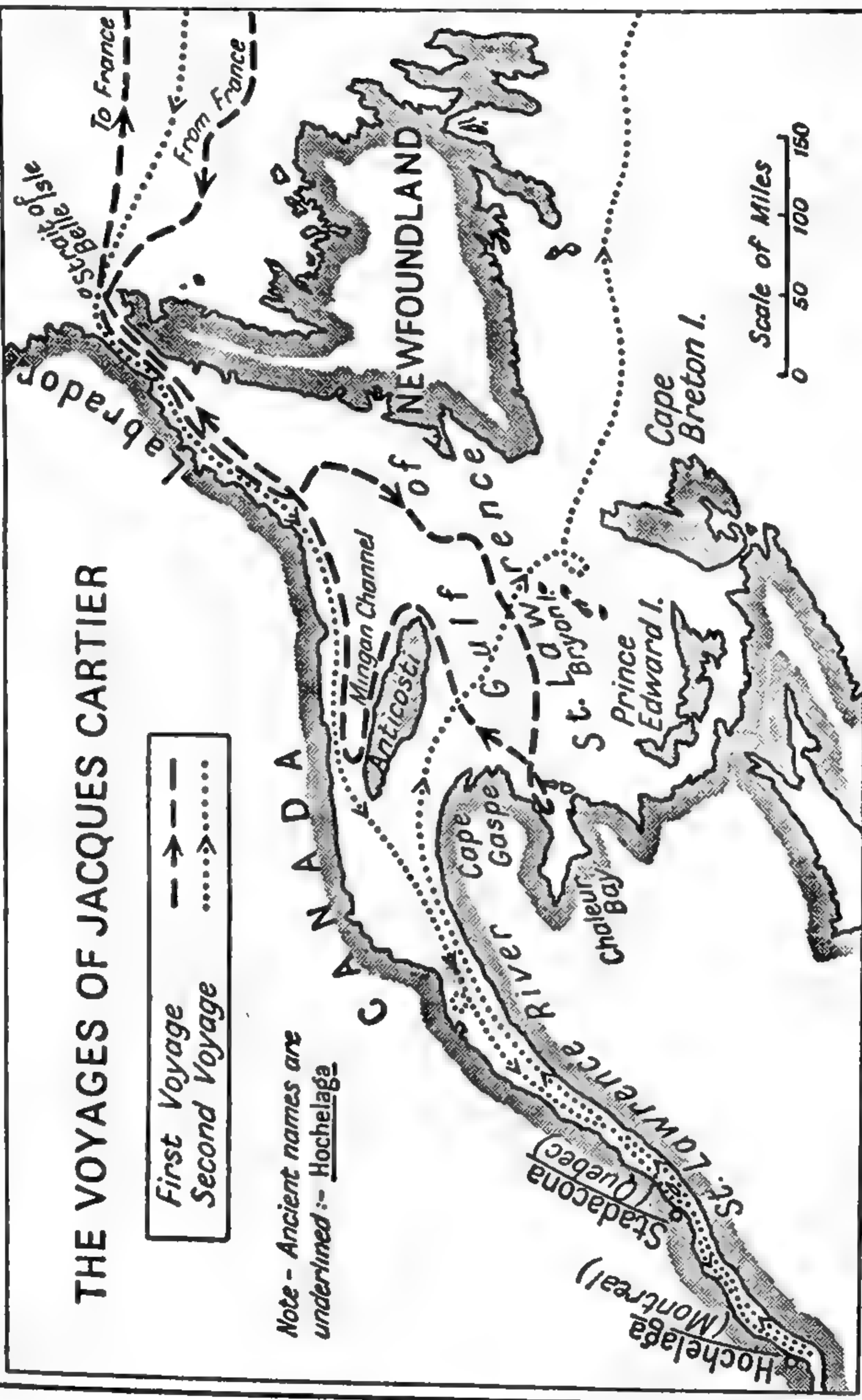
Three weeks later Cartier reached the shores of Newfoundland—a quick passage in those days. After carefully exploring the coast-line and making accurate charts of many useful harbours and inlets for the benefit of navigators who would come after him, he sailed on to Labrador. Here again he thoroughly explored the coast-line, and was bitterly disappointed with nearly everything he saw. The harbours were fine, but the land was bleak and barren. ‘I am rather inclined to think that this is the land God gave to Cain,’ declared Cartier. ‘The land is composed of nothing but stones and horrible rugged rocks ; for along the whole of the north shore I did not see one cartload of earth, and yet I landed several times.’

At length, when the ice broke up, he found a passage between Labrador and Newfoundland. This was the Strait of Belle Isle. Full of high hopes that he had found a passage which would lead him to the wealth of the Indies, he sailed through it and into the wide Gulf of St Lawrence (so named because he first saw it on the feast day of St Lawrence). Here the coasts were well wooded and fertile, and the climate was much warmer. Along the coast of New Brunswick (as it is now called) they saw many vast forests of pine and maple and ash, while the open country was bright with many coloured flowers and berries.

THE VOYAGES OF JACQUES CARTIER

First Voyage ———→
 Second Voyage→

Note - Ancient names are underlined :- Hochelaga



On shore the sailors found many fine meadows of grass and wild corn and peas, red and white roses, and lakes full of salmon. They had found a land as rich as their native France.

One hot day in July Cartier's two little ships sailed into a wide bay which he called the Bay of Heat (Chaleur Bay). Seeing so great an expanse of sunlit sea he again believed he had found the route to the Indies, and after lying at anchor for some time, waiting for a favourable wind, he sailed on full of hope. Soon he was bitterly disappointed to see the headland which marked the end of the bay, and to realize that he had not found the long-sought passage. Fog now descended and the ships sailed on across the mouth of the St Lawrence River to Anticosti Island. Heavy seas forced them to shelter in Gaspé Bay.

Cartier and his crew went ashore and erected a great cross thirty feet high, on which they hung a shield inscribed with the Fleur-de-lis and the words 'Vive le Roy de France'. Then in the presence of the wondering natives who had crowded to greet the strange white men, they all knelt in prayer.

Suspecting that the strangers had come to claim the land for themselves, as indeed they had, the chief of the Indians made a long speech to Cartier, explaining that the country belonged to him and his people. No white man ought to set on it the sign of any other chief. In reply Cartier told him that he and his people had no need to fear the white

men, who came as friends. In proof of this, he gave the chief a hatchet and dressed his two sons in red caps and shirts. The chief agreed to allow the two young men to go to France with Cartier.

Cartier thought very poorly of the Indians with their paint and feathers. Except for their canoes and fishing nets, he said, none of them had any possessions worth more than a few pence. But they were very friendly and offered the sailors furs in exchange for knives and cooking pots.

In August bad weather forced Cartier to give orders for the return voyage to France, and the two ships battled their way through high seas in the Strait of Belle Isle to the Atlantic Ocean. After a stormy voyage they reached St Malo safely in September 1534. With them were the two sons of the Indian Chief, who were to tell the King of France about the wonders of New France.

Next year, 1535, Cartier received orders from the King of France to complete his discoveries. This time he set sail from St Malo with three larger ships and in a few weeks he reached the mouth of the St Lawrence. The two Indians returned with him, having learned to speak French and having taught him something of their language. They promised to show him the way to the rich lands, which, they said, could be found farther up the river St Lawrence. These were the Kingdoms of Hochelaga, Saugenay and Canada. The Indians told Cartier that he would find many wonders and

great wealth in these Kingdoms, and he began to hope that perhaps at last he was on the way to the Indies. He even thought that Canada might prove to be the land of the Great Khan of China! He did not yet understand that the Indians' ideas of wealth were quite different from his.

Soon they were sailing smoothly up the great unknown river, between steep cliffs and thickly-wooded banks. Cartier and his men could not fail to notice that they had found a very beautiful country, but they were eager to hurry on. In a few days they reached a great Indian stronghold called Stadacona (the modern Quebec). Here they were made welcome by the 'head of Canada', an Indian chief named Donnacona. With him came many Indian warriors, all painted and feathered, who stared with amazement at the great floating 'islands' with their huge 'wings' and at the men with pale faces. Soon Cartier and his men were invited to a great feast in the Indian village at the foot of the great rock of Quebec (which they were the first white men to see). How they stared as the Indian warriors danced round their great fires and sang strange songs about the brave deeds of their tribe! Perhaps they shivered, too, when they heard the blood-curdling yells of triumph. The Indians were their friends now, but what terrible enemies they might make!

Cartier now began to learn more about the Indians. Though he called them 'poor Savages',

he admired their skill as hunters and trappers. They were very friendly to the white men, with whom they readily shared their miserable huts and food, but Cartier noticed how cruelly they treated their enemies, whom they tortured unmercifully.

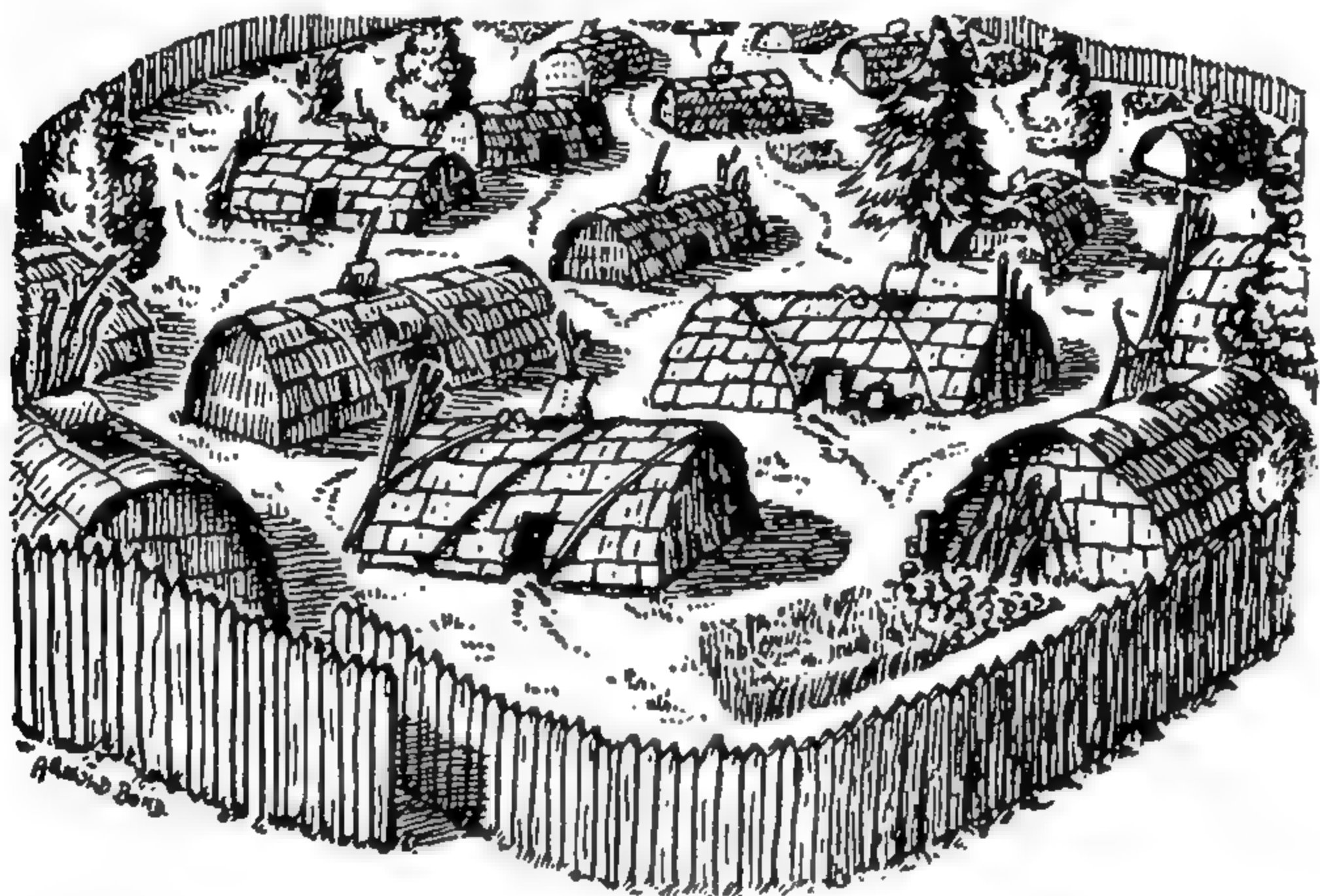
The Indians at Stadacona were eager for the Frenchmen to stay with them, and tried to prevent them from sailing on to Hochelaga. It was very dangerous, they declared, to travel farther up the river. As a sign of this, three medicine men with blackened faces and dressed in white dog-skins and long horns came sailing down the river in a canoe, uttering strange howls. As they came ashore at Stadacona all three fell flat on their faces, and an interpreter explained to Cartier that this meant that all who went to Hochelaga would perish. But the French were not so easily frightened, and a few days later they set sail again. But Cartier left two of his ships and some of the crew behind at Stadacona.

Not long afterwards they reached Hochelaga. Cartier had been led to expect a magnificent city, and he was very disappointed to see a collection of long huts surrounded by a wooden fence. On his arrival the chief placed on Cartier's head his crown of porcupine quills and feathers, and hailed him as a god. In return Cartier presented the Indian with many gifts



A PORCUPINE

of beads, hatchets, knives and cooking-pots. At the same time his bugles blew a fanfare, after which Cartier and his men knelt in prayer. When Cartier tried to explain the Christian religion to the Indians they listened very attentively and tried to understand



him. Nowadays we sometimes forget that explorers like Cartier were often more keen to make converts to Christianity than they were to discover new lands and new wealth. They saw nothing wrong in preaching to the savages while claiming their country.

Later the Indians took Cartier to the top of a neighbouring hill, from which he could see the full beauty of the land he had discovered. It seemed to him to be the finest of lands, covered with the noblest trees in the world. He called this mountain Mont Royal (or Réal), and from this came the name of Montreal.

Winter was then approaching. Cartier and his men returned to Stadacona, where they built a fort. It was too late to return to France, and soon their ships were frozen tightly in the ice. The weather grew so bitterly cold, and they were so short of food, that many of them soon fell ill of scurvy. Those who died were buried secretly in the snow. For Cartier did not trust the Indians and was convinced that as soon as he or his men showed signs of weakness they would be attacked and murdered for their weapons, their hatchets, pots and other treasures. Already the Indians were greedily demanding more of these things in exchange for food. So no Indian was allowed inside the fort, and, whenever Indians approached, the few men who were still well enough made a great noise of shouting and banging in order to deceive the Indians about their numbers. Over twenty of his best sailors had died before Cartier learned from a friendly Indian that the scurvy (the disease from which they were dying) could be cured by a drink made from the bark of the white pine. By this means the lives of the rest of the crew were saved.

When spring came, Cartier determined to return to France, in spite of the stories the Indians told him of yet more wonderful lands. Before he left Stadacona he lured Donnacona aboard his ship and persuaded him to go to France. There were so few of Cartier's men left that one ship had to be abandoned.

When Donnacona arrived at the French court his stories of the gold and precious stones which the white men would find if they journeyed farther into Canada caused great excitement. Unfortunately the French King was not able to send another expedition for several years, and in the meantime Donnacona, who could not settle down in France, fell ill and died.

Five years later, in 1541, Cartier once again sailed from St Malo for New France, as it was called. This time he shared the leadership of a large expedition with a nobleman named the Sieur de Roberval, who was to be the viceroy of the colony which was to be founded. With them went a large band of colonists. Unfortunately Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval could not agree. During the voyage their ships were separated, and Cartier spent a winter in Canada without seeing the viceroy. In the spring he returned to France. It was left for others to settle the lands he had discovered. His work as an explorer was done. He spent the remainder of his days quietly at home, and even the date of his death is unknown.

Cartier's fellow countrymen were disappointed by his failure to discover a new route to the Indies, and it was many years before they appreciated the full value of his discoveries. To-day, the lands he first made known to the world are some of the richest in the Dominion of Canada.

MUNGO PARK

FOUR hundred years before the Birth of Christ the Greek historian Herodotus told the story of some young men who crossed the desert from Libya and travelled southwards until they came to a river which flowed from west to east. This river must have been none other than the Niger, the third largest river of Africa. For many centuries after the time of Herodotus the most learned geographers in Europe could say no more than that they believed there was such a river. Where it rose, where it reached the sea, and which way it flowed, nobody could say. Until Mungo Park succeeded in reaching it at the end of the eighteenth century the River Niger remained a complete mystery.

In the year 1788 a group of well-known British noblemen and scientists formed the African Association. Its purposes were to send explorers to the unknown regions of Africa and to trade with its people. One of the first tasks it undertook was an expedition to West Africa to explore the course of the Niger and visit the famous city of Timbuktu, which was said to be on its banks.

Of the first four explorers sent out by the African Association, the first died in Cairo, the second failed to cross the Sahara, the third died just as he

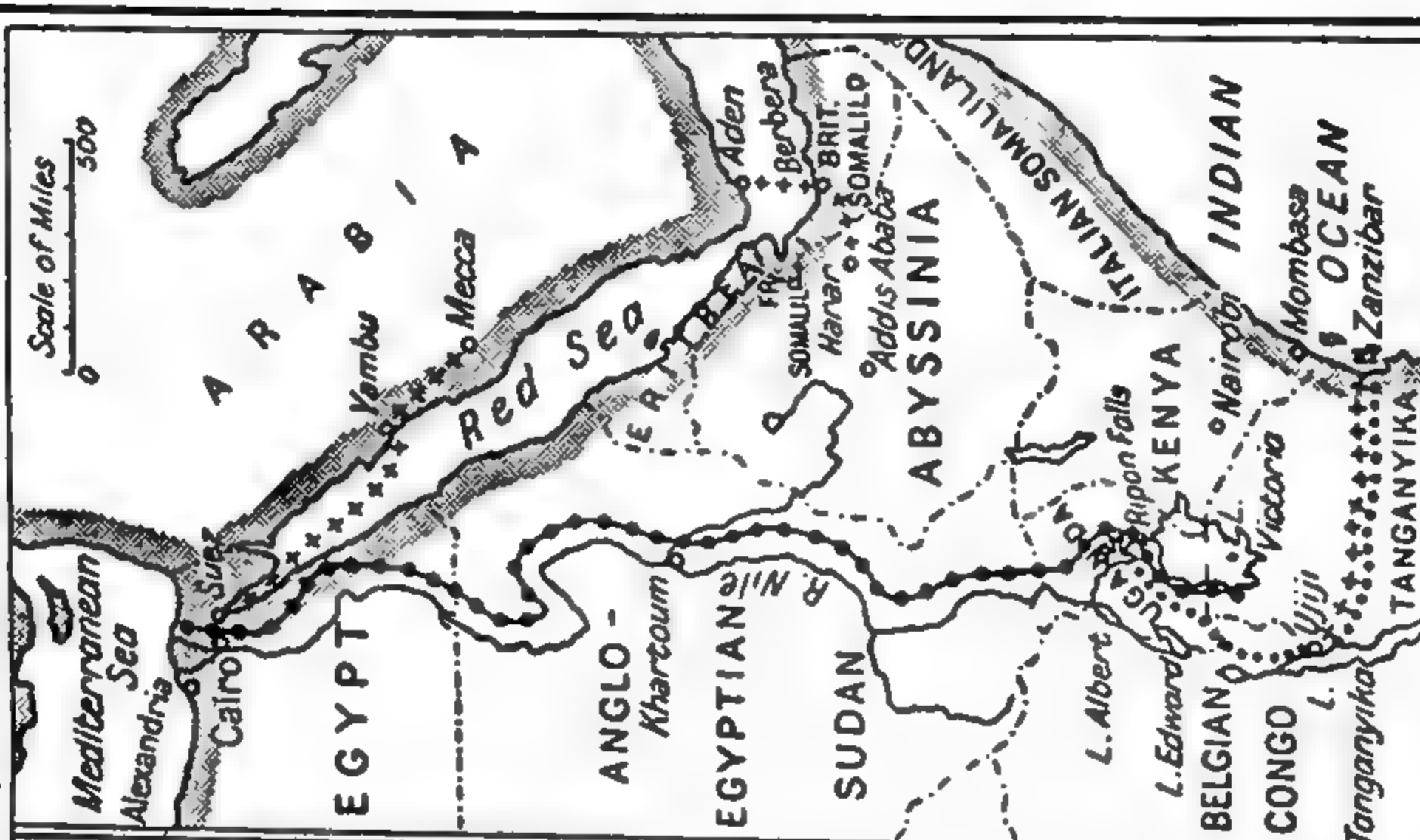
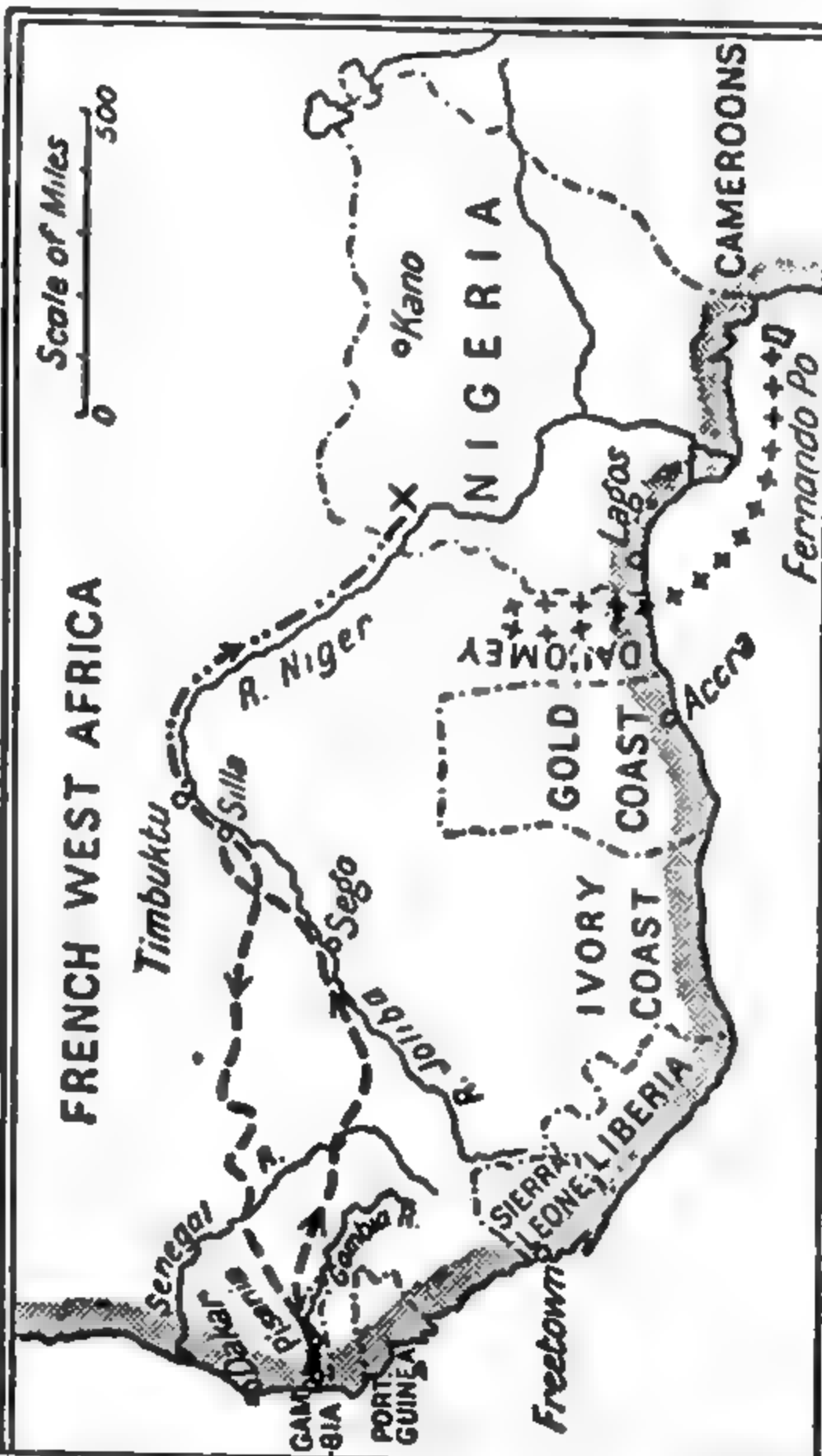
reached the Niger, and the fourth was murdered. Then a young Scottish doctor named Mungo Park volunteered to make yet another attempt.

Mungo Park was twenty-four years of age when he left England for West Africa. After working for some time for a surgeon named Anderson and studying medicine at Edinburgh University, he became an assistant surgeon on board a ship, and sailed to Sumatra. It was on his return that he heard that the African Association was looking for a volunteer to explore the course of the Niger.

Mungo Park decided to try to reach the Niger by way of the River Gambia. He left England in May 1795, and a month later arrived at the mouth of the Gambia. Travelling on horseback, he journeyed to Pisania, a small village some two hundred miles up the river where a few British merchants carried on their trade. For six months he stayed with them while he learned Mandingo, the language spoken at that time in some parts of West Africa. Very wisely, he believed that without knowing the language he would never find out much about the country or its people. At the same time he began a careful study of the country and the many tribes who inhabited it. Everything interested him: wild animals, birds, trees, rivers, crops, trade, manners and customs. He even noted the way different tribes governed themselves, and how they prepared their food. All these observations he

THE TRAVELS OF MUNGO PARK, BURTON, SPEKE, AND GRANT

- Mungo Park ———→
- 1st. Journey ———→
- 2nd. Journey ———→
- Burton + + + + +
- Speke
- Speke & Grant ———●———
- Probable scene
of Park's death X



wrote down in a journal which he kept throughout his long journey, sometimes with great difficulty.

When he began his search for the Niger he took with him a native servant named Johnson and a lively native boy called Demba. They carried very little—enough food for two days, some beads, amber and tobacco with which to buy more food, a few changes of clothes, two pairs of pistols, two guns, a sextant, a compass, a thermometer, and a blue umbrella. Mungo Park was on horseback, while his two servants rode donkeys.

He had already discovered that he would have to pass through countries belonging to many different kings and chiefs, some friendly, others hostile. He had been warned, too, that he might be treated as a spy, especially as these kings were often at war with one another, and no king would welcome him unless he brought gifts.

At first all went well, and they were made welcome in the villages they passed, though they sometimes had to pay taxes before they were allowed to continue their journey.

When they came to a village named Fatteconda, where an earlier explorer had been murdered, Mungo Park was anxious not to offend the inhabitants or their King in any way. On being summoned to the presence of the King, he put on his best blue coat with brass buttons, tucked his umbrella under his arm, and took with him some gunpowder, amber and tobacco as gifts. For a

time the King refused to believe that any man could be so mad as to travel through such dangerous country merely to see a river, but when Mungo Park gave him not only the gunpowder, amber and tobacco, but also his umbrella, he became quite friendly. He furled and unfurled the umbrella many times to the great delight of himself and his attendants, who for some time failed to understand the use of this wonderful machine.

Then the King's eye fell on Mungo Park's magnificent blue coat, which so much took his fancy that he asked for this too. Knowing that the King could quite easily take it by force, if he wished, Park quietly took off his coat, the only good one he had, and laid it at the King's feet.

Next Mungo Park found himself surrounded by the ladies of the court, all of whom begged for medicine or amber. 'They were ten or twelve in number,' he said, 'most of them young and handsome, and wearing on their heads ornaments of gold, and beads of amber.' They made fun of his white skin and prominent nose. He must have been dipped in milk when he was a baby, they declared, and had his nose pinched every day until it grew to its present ugly shape.

Travelling steadily eastward, Mungo Park's little party next came to a country full of robbers. To escape notice they travelled at night, setting out as soon as the villagers were asleep and the moon was shining bright. Except for the howling of

wild beasts, all was still and silent in the deep forest, and nobody spoke except in a whisper. From time to time Mungo Park's guide pointed out the wolves and hyenas as they crept in silence from one hiding-place to another.

The next day, which was Christmas Eve, 1795, the party arrived at a town called Joag. During the night a body of horsemen rode up to the hut where Mungo Park was resting. Declaring that they had been sent by the King, who was angry because a stranger had entered the country without paying taxes or bringing presents, they robbed Mungo Park of nearly all his belongings. Soon after this they met the nephew of yet another king who showed them the way to the Senegal River—for the price of yet more of Park's belongings.

When he came to the kingdom of Kaarta, Mungo Park's progress towards the Niger was suddenly checked, because the King, who was at war with a neighbouring tribe, refused to offer any help, although he was quite friendly. Instead, he advised the explorer to go northwards through the land of the Arabs, and then turn east again.

This course led Park into difficulties. To the Arabs, who were Mohammedans, all Christians were natural enemies, and it was not long before they attacked him, spat in his face, and robbed him. In February 1796 at a town called Jasra he was taken prisoner by the Arab Chief, Ali, who carried him off to the camp at Benowm, because his wife

was very eager to see a live Christian. No sooner had he arrived in Ali's camp than he was surrounded by so vast a crowd that he could scarcely move. They asked him a thousand questions, searched his pockets, made him unbutton his coat to show the whiteness of his skin, and even counted his fingers and toes, as if they did not really believe he was a human being.

He was then imprisoned in a hut with a hog. Each day the boys came in to beat the hog, and the men and women to torment Mungo Park. From sunrise to sunset, he said, 'I was forced to bear with patience the insults of the rudest savages on earth.' He was half-starved and kept without water, for the Arabs believed that the mere touch of his lips would pollute their water. Every time he went near their wells he was driven away. At last, mad with thirst, he crawled to a cattle-trough where cows were drinking, and shared the last drops of water with them.

After enduring four months of this cruel treatment Mungo Park succeeded in escaping. His chance came when the King of Kaarta sent his army to attack the town where Park was imprisoned. While the townspeople were fleeing in panic, Park stole out of his tent one night, mounted his horse and galloped away. He was soon followed by three Arabs who contented themselves with robbing him of his cloak. He was now in a terrible plight. Alone, without food or drink, he

almost died under the blazing sun. His mouth soon became parched and inflamed. To ease the burning pain he tried chewing the leaves of shrubs, but found them all bitter and dry. 'A little before sunset,' he wrote, 'having reached the top of a gently rising hill, I climbed a high tree, from the topmost branches of which I cast a melancholy look over the barren wilderness but without discovering the most distant trace of a human dwelling.' Wherever he looked he could see nothing but shrubs and sand. Soon he became too faint to walk and his horse too weary to carry him. At last he collapsed on the sand, convinced that his last hour had come. But when the sun went down and the air became cooler, some of his strength returned, and he managed to struggle on. Suddenly he was surprised by vivid flashes of lightning followed by heavy rain. 'For more than an hour, it rained plentifully and I quenched my thirst by wringing and sucking my clothes.' All that night he stumbled on, with only his compass to guide him and the flashes of lightning to see by.

Still keeping a faithful record of everything he saw, Mungo Park travelled on from village to village. Sometimes a friendly Negro offered to guide him, sometimes he travelled alone. In some villages he was welcomed, while from others he had to flee for his life. More than once he was forced to spend the night in the open where the howling of wild beasts kept him and his horse in a state of terror.

Then one day he met a party of Negroes who were on their way to a place called Sego, which they said was on the banks of the 'Joliba' or 'great water'. After a few days they came to some marshy ground, and suddenly Mungo Park heard one of the Negroes call out: 'See! the water!'

'Looking forwards,' he wrote, in his journal on 20th July, 1796, 'I saw with infinite pleasure the great object of my mission, the long-sought for, majestic Niger, glittering to the morning sun, as broad as the Thames at Westminster, and flowing slowly *to the eastward*. I hastened to the brink, and having drunk of the water, lifted up my fervent thanks in prayer to the Great Ruler of All Things for having thus far crowned my endeavour with success.'

Mungo Park was amazed to find that Sego was a very large town. As far as he could tell it contained some thirty thousand inhabitants. It was really four towns, two on each bank of the Niger, each being surrounded by high mud walls. Most of the houses were built of clay. Unlike most African huts, they were not round but square, and had flat roofs. Many were whitewashed and had two floors.

Having discovered that the Niger flowed towards the east, Mungo Park set out to follow it to the sea. But by that time he was thin and weak with fever. His only possessions were his torn clothes and his half-starved horse, which was too weak

to carry him. The local king was suspicious of him, refusing to allow him to cross the river. Heavy rains made the paths difficult to follow, and mosquitoes tormented him day and night.

Hoping to reach the mysterious city of Timbuktu,



he pushed on, sometimes by canoe and sometimes walking along the river bank. At last his horse collapsed and he was forced to leave him behind. Then his guide left him, and soon Park became too worn out to go any farther. Very sadly he turned back, but not before he had explored eighty miles of the river.

His sufferings were by no means over, and he was still five hundred miles from the Gambia River. One evening he reached a village and asked for shelter but the gates were shut in his face although

there were lions nearby. One came so near that Park heard him rustling in the grass, and climbed a tree for safety. At last, at midnight, the villagers had pity on him, and opened the gate.

Not long afterwards a band of armed robbers attacked him and stripped him naked, but one of them gave him back his trousers, shirt and hat, in the crown of which his journal was hidden. After the robbers had gone he sat on the ground for some time, looking around him in amazement and terror. 'I saw myself,' he wrote in his journal, 'in the midst of a vast wilderness, in the depth of the rainy season, naked and alone, surrounded by savage animals and men still more savage.' But somehow he kept struggling on from one unfriendly village to another, until at last he reached a town called Kambia, where he joined a negro caravan which was on its way to the Gambia River. Not till 16th September, 1797, did he reach Pisania once more, where he was greeted as one risen from the dead. He had travelled nearly 2,000 miles.

Part of the mystery of the River Niger was now solved. It was certain that it existed, geographers no longer confused it with the Gambia or the Senegal, and it was now known that it flowed from west to east. But its source and its mouth were still unknown. Some people thought it rose in the middle of Africa, and Park himself thought it might be part of the Congo River.

Mungo Park had left England an unknown young

man. He returned a famous explorer, and when his journal of his travels was published so many people wished to read it that the sales soon made him quite wealthy.

Soon after his return he married the daughter of Mr Anderson, the surgeon who had taught him medicine. Park then settled down as a doctor at Peebles, but he soon became restless. The humdrum life of a country doctor was unpleasant to him, and it is not surprising that he began to look for a chance of returning to Africa.

Seven years after returning to England, Mungo Park was asked to lead another expedition to the Niger. This time he was instructed to follow the course of the river as far as possible and then to find either a new route to the Atlantic coast or to Cairo, whichever seemed easier.

This second expedition was on a much bigger scale. About forty white men, mostly soldiers, accompanied him, but most of them were more a hindrance than a help. As before, Mungo Park began the journey inland at Pisanía. It was May 1805, when they started out, and very soon heavy rains began to fall. Soon, too, most of the party were shaking with fever. Almost the only fit man was Park himself, and he found himself toiling night and day carting baggage, looking after the sick men, fighting off thieves and wild animals.

Somehow or other they kept going until in August they reached the 'Great Water'. But

only about seven out of the forty who started lived to see the Niger. By this time Park himself was ill, and he decided to continue the journey by river. He obtained two large native canoes and joined them together to make a vessel forty feet in length and six feet wide, which he christened H.M.S. 'Joliba'. The Niger at this point was called the Joliba by the local inhabitants.

So, in November 1805, he gathered the remnants of his party and set sail down the 'Great Water'. Before he left he wrote to a friend in England: 'I shall set sail to the east with a fixed resolution to discover the termination of the Niger or perish in the attempt, and though all the Europeans with me should die, and though I myself were half dead, I would still persevere, and if I could not succeed in the object of my journey, I would at least die on the Niger.' At the same time he wrote a letter to his wife saying that he was in good health and in no danger. He did not intend to stop or land anywhere, he added, until he reached the sea, and he hoped to be back in England by May 1806.

Neither Mungo Park nor any of his party was ever seen again. Many years later an African guide reported that after sailing nearly 1,000 miles down the river, H.M.S. 'Joliba' was ambushed and attacked by savages, and all on board were killed or drowned.

RICHARD BURTON

FEW people noticed the Persian who called himself Mirza Abdullah of Bushiri go on board a steamer at Southampton one evening in April 1853. When he disembarked at Alexandria a fortnight later, not even the keen-eyed beggars gave him a second glance. To them and to most of the people he met in Alexandria and Cairo he was just another pilgrim bound for Mecca, the Holy City of Islam. He was of dark complexion, with a huge moustache, and he spoke Arabic fluently, though with a Persian accent. When it became known that he was a doctor his services were in great demand in the crowded pilgrim ship from Suez to Yambu. His fellow-pilgrims could not fail to notice the scrupulous piety of Mirza Abdullah, as well as his fiery temper and his powerful muscles.

On disembarking at Yambu the pilgrims formed a caravan and began the long and weary journey to Mecca. Mirza Abdullah mounted a camel and travelled with scornful disdain of the burning heat, the sun glare, the blinding dust and the constant menace of robbers. He allowed no discomfort or danger to disturb his devotions, and even when the caravan was attacked by a fierce band of Bedouins he remained quite calm. Day after day

the pilgrim caravan trekked across the burning sand until at last the city of Mecca could be seen, shining like a pearl on the horizon.

In the holy city, which it was certain death for an infidel to enter, the faithful pilgrims—including Mirza Abdullah—went from one sacred place to another, repeating prayers with upraised hands and performing the customary rites. ‘There is no god but Allah alone,’ they chanted unceasingly, ‘whose Covenant is truth, and whose servant is victorious. There is no god but Allah . . .’ None was more devout than Mirza Abdullah, none more careful to chant all the prayers and perform all the rituals. Not even the most suspicious fellow-pilgrim noticed how keenly he examined the Ka’aba, the mysterious sacred black stone in the centre of the city. Nor did anyone ever detect that the Persian doctor was making careful notes of everything he saw and heard. No one suspected that the pious Mirza Abdullah was very pleased to leave the holy city and make his way to the safety of the British consulate at Jeddah.

For the pilgrim who called himself Mirza Abdullah was in reality an English army officer named Richard Francis Burton, and this daring journey to the forbidden city of Mecca immediately made him famous.

Richard Francis Burton was born at Barham House, Hertfordshire, on 19th March, 1821. His father was a retired army officer who was forced to

live for many years in the South of France and Italy for the sake of his health. The Burton family rarely lived for long in one place, and Richard's love for travel began early. He soon showed, too, that he could learn languages very rapidly. By the time he was four years old he was learning Greek and Latin, and his childhood travels gave him the opportunity to learn French and Italian, which he soon spoke as fluently as his native English. He and his brother Edward were wild, fearless boys, whom no governess or tutor could ever control, and they had very little ordinary schooling. Richard's favourite sport was fencing, at which he became a master. He hated any kind of settled life, and when his father sent him to Oxford to become a minister of the Church, he was determined to escape. He took great care to be seen at races, which students were forbidden to attend, and was soon sent down from the University. While at Oxford he began to study Arabic.

It was clear that Richard Burton was not destined for the Church, and his father willingly allowed him to join the East India Company's army and go to India. No sooner had Burton landed in Bombay than he set about learning Hindustani, which he mastered in a few weeks. He was very eager to take part in some fighting, but was not allowed to do so—perhaps because he was not a trained soldier. So he filled in time by learning more languages. He learned Gujerati, Sindhi, Sanskrit,

Marathi and Persian, one after the other, and on a visit to Goa he even learned Portuguese. He also became familiar with many of the lesser Indian dialects, and was soon given the post of Regimental Interpreter. It is said that he could speak 29 languages.

While he was busy learning languages in India, Burton also learned a great deal about the Indian peoples and their manner of living—their religion, their food, their dress, and their customs. Unlike his fellow officers, who refused to mix with the Indians, he spent long days wandering around towns and villages, listening to the gossip of the bazaars, and often he would put on native dress and go to live with Indian friends. It was in this way that he became Mirza Abdullah of Bushiri. For he found that his appearance and his wonderful command of their languages made it easy for him to pass as an Indian. When he found that his real identity was never suspected he would often travel from town to town in the guise of a merchant of Persian origin, and in this way he learned more about the manners and customs of the Indians than any other European of his time.

But he soon grew tired of being a soldier who never fought a battle. He wanted a more adventurous life, and after much pleading he was given leave by the Army to go to Arabia to perfect his knowledge of Arabic. Nobody suspected that his real intention was to visit Mecca, the city forbidden to all but Moslems.

Soon after his return from Mecca, Burton began to plan a new and equally daring expedition. This time he planned to go to Somaliland in East Africa, and visit the mysterious forbidden city of Harar on the Abyssinian border. The exact whereabouts of Harar were not then known, for no traveller from Europe had been known to visit it. There was a tradition in East Africa that if a Christian reached Harar the city would soon fall. It was scarcely surprising that every European who had tried to reach the city had been murdered. The tribes who inherited this part of East Africa were very devoted Moslems, and Burton was told that it would be certain death to venture among them.

No man knew more about the Moslems than Burton, and as a man who had been to Mecca he knew he would be respected everywhere. He decided to travel to Harar disguised as a Moslem merchant. Three other Army officers—Lieutenants Speke, Herne and Stroyan—were allowed to accompany him on this expedition. Since they could not be disguised they remained on the Somali coast to guard Burton's retreat while he began the journey inland.

It was a long and hard journey through rocky, mountainous country infested with lions as well as with warlike and suspicious tribes. With only timid Somali guides and porters for company Burton could never feel safe for a moment. Every

night he slept with his pistols by his side and his rifle butt for a pillow. Often he thought he had been discovered. At every village the inhabitants rushed out to stare at the stranger and to wonder at his fair complexion. To add to his troubles he fell ill with dysentery, but struggled on until at last Harar was in sight. It was a miserable collection of low buildings—not the beautiful white city he expected to see.

Soon after his arrival at Harar, Burton had an audience with the Emir. 'I walked into a vast hall,' he afterwards wrote, 'a hundred feet long, between two long rows of Galla spearsmen, between whose lines I had to pass. They were half-naked savages, each was holding, with its butt end on the ground, a huge spear with a head the size of a shovel. I purposely sauntered down them coolly with a swagger, with my eyes fixed on their dangerous-looking faces. I had a pistol concealed in my waist belt, and determined, at the first show of excitement, to run up to the Emir and put it to his head, if it were necessary, to save my own life.'

The Emir was a young, yellow-faced man dressed in a crimson robe and a red and white turban. He listened carefully and seemed pleased when Burton told him that the English



A TURBAN

people wished to be on friendly terms with the people of Harar.

After he had carefully studied Harar and its people Burton requested permission to leave the city and return to the coast. But the Emir would give no reply to this request, and for some days Burton wondered whether he would ever be permitted to return. At last the Emir's Vizier fell ill, and Burton told him that he could obtain remedies for his disease in Aden. On hearing this the Emir agreed to let the traveller return to Aden. A few weeks later Burton rejoined his fellow officers in Berbera, where they had agreed to meet, and they all sailed for Aden.

Shortly afterwards Burton and his three friends returned to Berbera with a much larger expedition. Unhappily their camp was attacked one night by a vast horde of fierce Bedouins. Fighting desperately for their lives, Burton, Speke and Herne succeeded in cutting their way through their attackers, but Stroyan was clubbed to death, and both Burton and Speke were badly wounded.

Even the oldest maps of Africa show the great lakes which we now know to be the source of the River Nile. In Burton's time, however, nobody knew the exact whereabouts of these lakes, although a few Arab and Portuguese traders in East Africa claimed to have seen them. In 1856, soon after the end of the Crimean War, the Royal Geographical

Society organized an expedition to discover and map these lakes.

Richard Burton had long planned an expedition to discover the source of the Nile, where he expected to find a group of great lakes. He was overjoyed when his plans were approved by the Royal Geographical Society and he was asked to lead the expedition. Once again he was granted leave from the army in India, and his old comrade Lieutenant Speke was permitted to join him.

The explorers reached Zanzibar at the end of 1856. Zanzibar was then a great slave market and trading post on an island off the east coast of Africa. After a preliminary exploration lasting three months, during which both men had severe bouts of fever, they made a real start in June 1857. No one at Zanzibar had been able to give them much help except to warn them of fierce tribes with poisoned arrows, herds of wild elephants, lion-haunted forests and fever-infested marshes. Nor could anyone tell them which way to go. They had to rely on rumours and their own knowledge of Africa. With them went a few negro soldiers and 36 African porters and guides, and at first they travelled across the swampy and fever-ridden coastal plain. It was not long before both the explorers were very ill with malaria and marsh-fever, but somehow they managed to keep going till they reached Ujiji in February 1858.

‘All along our way,’ wrote Burton, ‘we were

saddened by the sight of clean-picked skeletons, and here and there the swollen corpses of porters who had perished by starvation.' They passed through vast grass-lands, through dark forests and jungles infested with fierce animals and fiercer people, through villages stricken with smallpox or wrecked by slave traders, and through steep mountain passes. Their horses died and many of their porters deserted them. Often they saw great armies of archers and spearmen preparing for battle, and expected any moment to be killed. Sometimes they were so exhausted and ill that they were forced to lean on their guides and to rest every few yards.

Their progress was painfully slow. Sometimes they halted in camp for days while they struggled to recover from a bout of malaria or sunstroke. Sometimes they were too weak to sit on their animals, and sometimes they lost them and were forced to walk for mile after mile through sun, rain, wind and mist. They were determined to reach the mountains as quickly as they could and exchange the unhealthy damp heat of the plains for the fresh air of the hills.

Three months after leaving the coast they reached Kazeh, a large Arab village where they spent over a month resting in a comfortable house. Soon their spirits revived and they were ready to set out once more.

Day after day they journeyed on, crossing rivers in frail canoes, struggling through swamps and

forests, arguing with chiefs who asked for money, fighting against mutiny among their porters. Very soon they fell sick again. Burton was stricken with paralysis caused by malaria, and Speke's eyes were so inflamed that he was nearly blind.

At last they reached a steep hill covered with spiky trees. As they climbed wearily towards the top Burton thought he saw a bright light in the distance.

‘What is that streak of light which lies below?’ he called to one of the guides.

‘That is the water you are in search of,’ replied the guide.

By this time Burton's eyes were also growing weak and he was disappointed at finding the lake so small—as he thought. But a few yards farther on the whole of Lake Tanganyika came into view, and he marvelled at the huge expanse of gleaming water surrounded by mountains.

At last, he was certain, he had found the source of the Nile. That night the two explorers camped in sight of the lake, and next day they hired a boat from an Arab and paddled along the coast till they came to the long-sought Ujiji.

There both men collapsed. For days they lay on the earth, too ill to walk or ride, read or write, or even talk. After a fortnight like this they managed to gather enough strength to explore the lake, for they had been told that a great river flowed out of its northern end. Perhaps it was the Nile! (We

know to-day that Lake Tanganyika is connected with the River Congo, not the Nile.)

When Burton fell ill again, Speke made a further journey to the north and discovered another great lake which he called the Victoria Nyanza in honour of the Queen. Speke at once realized that here was the true source of the Nile, and he hastened to rejoin Burton.

Eager to report their discoveries, the two explorers made their way back to Zanzibar, which they reached in March 1859. Burton, who was still a very sick man, went into hospital at Aden, while Speke hurried to England to claim for himself the honour of discovering the source of the Nile. Burton was naturally extremely angry when this news reached him, and the world was amazed to see the two men disputing for honours which they ought to have shared.

Two years later Speke led another expedition to the Great Lakes (this time without Burton). After an even more perilous journey than the first he reached Lake Victoria Nyanza once more. In company with his friend Captain Grant he followed the shores of the lake till he 'stood on the brink of the Nile . . . a magnificent stream from 600 to 700 yards wide, dotted with islets and rocks'. Farther north they discovered Ripon Falls. After many adventures they reached Alexandria and triumphantly announced that the mystery of the Nile was settled. A few years later, however,

another source of the Nile was discovered in Lake Victoria Nyanza.

Meanwhile Burton was continuing his career of adventure. As soon as he was fit again he was appointed British Consul at Fernando Po, an island off the Guinea Coast of Africa. He was not the man to rest content with the ordinary duties of a consul, even in a hot and unhealthy place like Fernando Po. Soon he was away on an expedition to explore Dahomey.

Burton was one of the first white men to visit Dahomey, and he took with him a message from Queen Victoria requesting the king to abolish the slave trade and the horrible practice of human sacrifice. After being kept waiting for many weeks, during which even the much-travelled Burton was disgusted by the deeds of wanton cruelty he saw, he spoke to the king and delivered the message. It was obvious that the king was by no means pleased and had not the slightest intention of agreeing to the Queen's request, but he was glad enough to see the gifts which Burton presented.

After his return from Fernando Po, Burton was sent as consul to Brazil. From there he went to Damascus and then to Trieste, where he died in 1890. Year after year he travelled whenever he could, but he visited no more forbidden cities and made no more great discoveries. His countrymen were late to recognize his greatness, and it was not

until a few years before his death that he was knighted. Reckless, hot-tempered, he often made enemies when he should have made friends, and perhaps because of this he died a rather disappointed man. To-day we can see more clearly how much he did to increase our knowledge of the world and its peoples.

ROALD AMUNDSEN

CAPTAIN R. F. SCOTT and his companions on his expedition to the South Pole reached Melbourne on board the *Terra Nova* in September 1910. There Scott received a telegram from the famous Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen, which read: 'Am going south. Amundsen.' At once Scott saw that he might be forestalled in his attempt to be the first man to reach the South Pole.* It was to be a race between himself and Amundsen. In spite of all this, Scott refused to be hurried, knowing that many lives might be lost if he set out on a headlong race to the South Pole.

But who was Amundsen? And why did he so suddenly and unexpectedly announce his plan to 'go south'?

Roald Amundsen was born on a farm near Oslo on 16th July, 1872. It was his mother's wish that he should become a doctor, and during her lifetime young Amundsen studied medicine at Oslo University. But already he had a secret ambition to be an Arctic explorer. When he was fifteen he read the story of Sir John Franklin, the famous British explorer who was lost in 1845 in an attempt to discover the North-West Passage. Many years

* See note on page 76.

later he said that reading about Franklin's expeditions changed the course of his whole life.

When Amundsen was twenty-one his mother died, and he felt himself free to pursue his own ambitions. First of all he took immense trouble to fit himself for his career. For several years he devoted himself to hard physical training, so that when he was medically examined for military service the army doctors were amazed at his splendid muscles. From reading the stories of other Arctic explorers he formed the opinion that many had failed through being unable to navigate their own ships. Amundsen made up his mind never to lead an expedition until he had experience as a ship's captain. For several years he spent all his time at sea. On one of his voyages he had his first taste of polar conditions when he joined a Belgian expedition to study the South Magnetic Pole.

Soon after his return from the Antarctic Amundsen obtained his licence as a ship's captain, and at once began to make his plans for an expedition of his own. 'I proposed,' he said, 'to combine my boyhood's dream of the North-West Passage with an aim, in itself of far greater scientific importance—that of locating the present situation of the Magnetic North Pole.' From the start he was given a great deal of advice and help by the leading scientists and explorers of the day, but he found it extremely difficult to raise enough money

to equip the expedition. By the time he had bought a ship and scientific instruments his money was almost spent. The ship was a 47-year-old fishing-smack named the *Gjøa* which had proved her worth in Arctic seas. At last, in 1903, despairing of obtaining any more funds for the expedition, Amundsen and six chosen companions went on board the *Gjøa* and set sail for Greenland. He already owed large sums of money, and no doubt his creditors thought they would never get it back.

Their route took them to Godhavn on the west coast of Greenland and then by way of Melville Bay to Beechy Island. From this point they sailed through unknown waters to King William Land, where they found a sheltered harbour for the *Gjøa* and settled down to spend the winter. They called the harbour Gjøahavn. During the long Arctic winter they made friends with neighbouring Eskimo tribes, and an Eskimo went with them when they left.

After leaving Gjøahavn their progress was often held up by fogs and drifting ice, but slowly, inch by inch it seemed, the little ship made its way forward. At last they came to a Sound on which all their hopes depended, for if the *Gjøa* could not pass through it they would be compelled to turn back, and no other passage was possible. Slowly the ship moved forward and all the time the water was getting shallower and shallower, but at last she was through. New dangers lay ahead.

First a stretch of ice had to be broken up, then more shallow water had to be crossed. Amundsen was so anxious that he could not eat or sleep. 'Day after day we crept forward, sounding our depth with the lead, trying here, there and everywhere to nose into a channel that would carry us clear to the known waters to the west.' Once there was only an inch of water to spare beneath the *Gjøa's* keel!

Then one morning when Amundsen had managed to snatch some sleep, came the cry 'Vessel in sight!' 'What a glorious sight that was—the distant outlines of a whaling vessel in the west . . . Victory was ours!' The vessel was the *Charles Hansen* of San Francisco. 'I am very glad,' said her captain, 'to be the first man to welcome you on getting through the North-West Passage.'

Soon after this moment of triumph the *Gjøa* became locked in the ice, and another year passed before she could make her way through the closely-packed ice fields to the Pacific Ocean. Meanwhile Amundsen made a dash by sledge to Eagle City, Alaska, to telegraph the news of his success to the world. Overnight he became famous. Not only was he the first man to sail through the North-West Passage, but he had also exactly determined the position of Magnetic North (70 degs. 30 mins. N., 95 degs. 30 mins. W.).

For a year or two after his return Amundsen devoted himself to lecturing about his discoveries

AMUNDSEN'S ARCTIC VOYAGES

- N.W. Passage -->--
- Overland Route ♦♦♦♦
- In Airship "Norge" -> . ->
- Track of Nansen in the "Fram" ->



in order to earn enough money to pay off his debts. But his mind was full of plans to lead an expedition to the North Pole. Like Nansen he planned to drift to the Pole in the *Fram*, the ship which Nansen himself had built especially for this purpose. Nansen's attempt to drift to the Pole across the eastern Arctic seas had failed, but Amundsen hoped to succeed by starting from Alaska. By early 1909 his plans were well on the way to completion when news came that the American explorer Robert Peary had succeeded in reaching the North Pole.

This news caused Amundsen to change his plans : he would go south instead. But he kept his change of plans a complete secret until the *Fram* was at sea.

That was how it came about that the first dash to the South Pole became a race between Amundsen and Scott. If you examine a map of the Antarctic region you will be able to see what vast distances they travelled across desolate wastes. Perhaps it is only fair to point out that their success was made possible by the discoveries of many other explorers. Well over a century earlier Captain Cook sailed as far south as 71 degs. 10 mins., in search of a great southern continent.

Then came Weddell, who in 1823 reached 74 degs. 15 mins. S., and whose name was given to the great sea to the south of South America. After him Sir James Clark Ross discovered Victoria Land and named the two volcanoes he found there

after his ships *Erebus* and *Terror*. The first man to land on the Antarctic Continent and spend a winter there was a Norwegian explorer named Borchgrevinck. It was from Borchgrevinck that Amundsen had the idea of making sledge journeys from a winter camp in the Antarctic. Then came Captain R. F. Scott who succeeded in reaching 82 degs. 17 mins. S., in 1902. This record was beaten in 1909 by Sir Ernest Shackleton, who reached 88 degs. 23 mins. S. Shackleton was only 113 miles from the Pole when he was forced to turn back, worn out by lack of food and violent storms.

Amundsen's plan was to build a winter camp on the Great Ice Barrier, a vast glacier hundreds of miles wide and over a hundred feet in height. Other explorers thought such a plan would be far too dangerous, because, they claimed, the Barrier was afloat and might shift its position. But Amundsen was convinced that the Barrier was firmly wedged in solid rock. He chose to build his winter camp in the Bay of Whales, which is much nearer to the Pole than any other starting point he could have chosen. He also believed that the going would be easier than the route chosen by Scott. And events proved him to be right.

After all the warnings he had been given about the dangers of the Great Ice Barrier, Amundsen was pleasantly surprised at the ease with which he and his companions surmounted it. With the *Fram*

safely moored in the Bay of Whales they went ashore to look for a good site for the camp. Their skis glided easily across loose snow, and in a very short time they were across the Barrier. Soon afterwards they found a sheltered place for the winter camp.

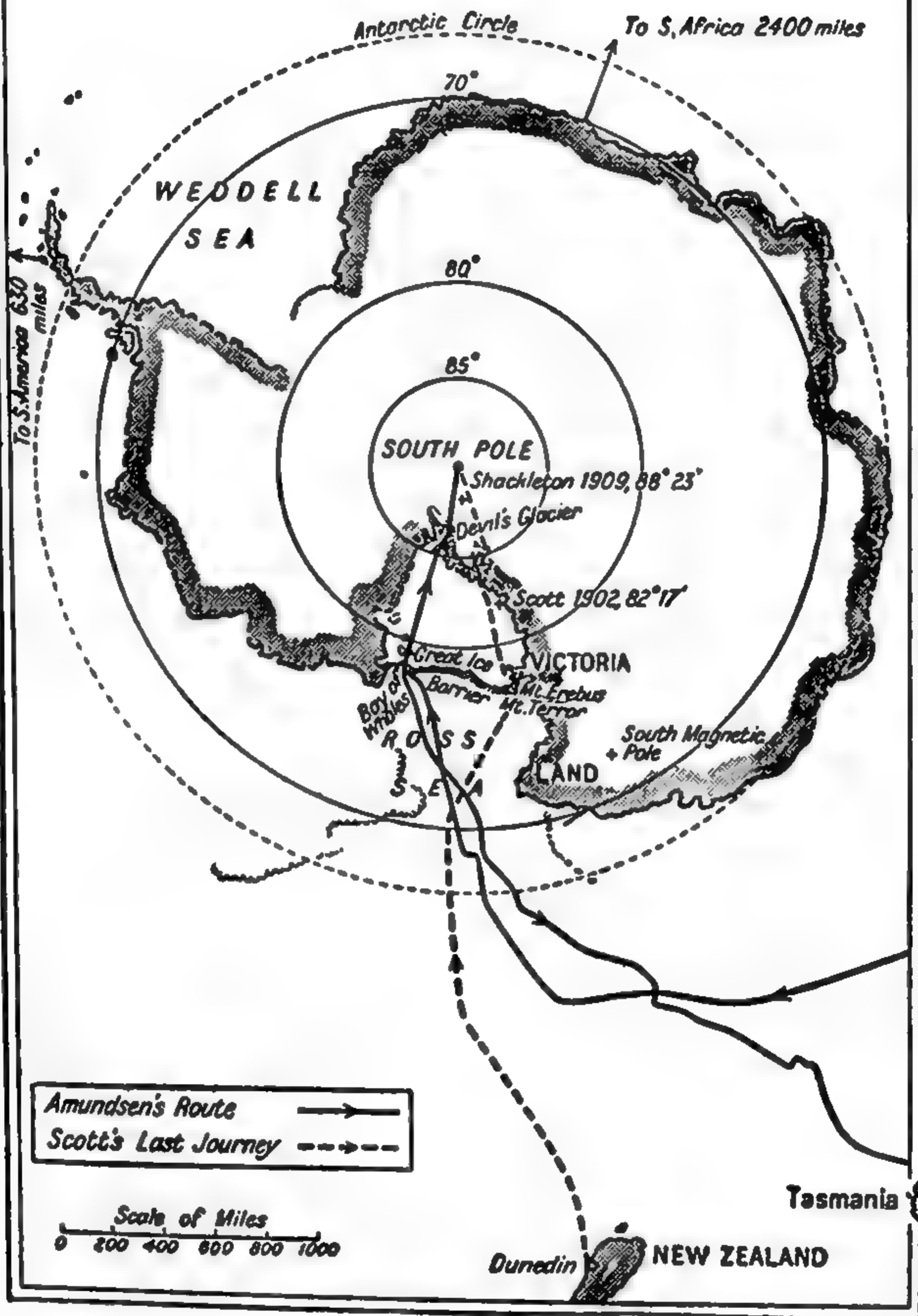
As quickly as possible stores, sledges, dogs and materials for building a hut were unloaded on to the ice. By the beginning of winter three tons of supplies had been unloaded and stored in depots on the route towards the South Pole. The farthest depot was in latitude 82 degs. S.

At last on 19th October, 1911, Amundsen and four chosen companions started for the Pole. They travelled on skis and each drove a sledge drawn by thirteen dogs. As most of their stores were in depots they travelled very light and made very quick progress. They reached latitude 85 degs. S., with such ease that they decided to push on as fast as they could to the Pole, some 680 miles there and back. They now had to pass from the Great Ice Barrier to land and to cross lofty mountains.

At every degree of latitude from 82 degs. S., they laid a depot stored with food for themselves and the dogs, and every five miles they built a snow beacon to guide them on the return journey.

At first the weather favoured them as they toiled up to a height of over 5,000 feet, but soon a terrible blizzard came down and for five days they were

THE SOUTH POLE



forced to rest in their tent. At the end of this time they were so tired of being shut in that they decided to ignore the blizzard. Soon afterwards they found themselves in a maze of wide chasms and crevasses. 'It looked as if a battle had been fought there,' said Amundsen, 'and the ammunition had been great blocks of ice.' They named this spot the Devil's Glacier. From here their way lay downhill on to a vast plateau, and then due south to the Pole. On 6th December they passed Shackleton's farthest south—88 degs. 23 mins. S. They were now farther south than any man had ever been.

The South Pole was reached on 14th December, 1911. On the same day Scott wrote in his diary: 'We are just starting our march with no very hopeful outlook.' Amundsen and his party stayed four days at the Pole making scientific observations, and then began the long return journey. Before leaving they put up a tent and wrote their names on a tablet fastened to the tent pole. They also left notes for Captain Scott, who reached the Pole on 18th January, 1912.

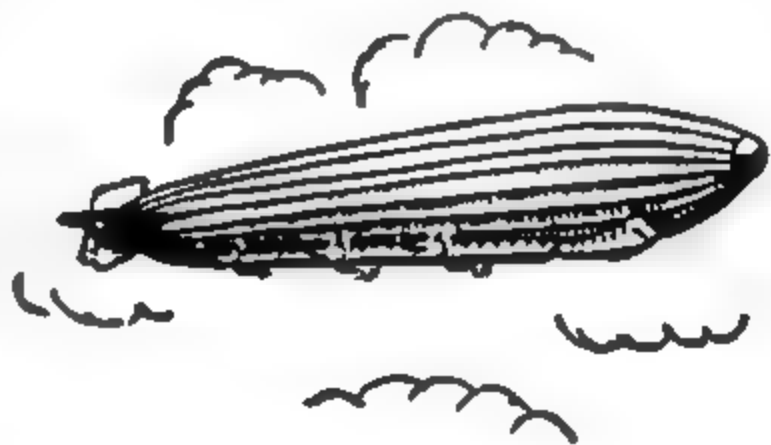
With their snow beacons and depots of food to guide them, Amundsen and his companions quickly made their way back to their camp and the *Fram*, and by June 1912 they were all back in Norway. Meanwhile misfortunes befell Scott's expedition. Two months after reaching the South Pole Scott and the four men who made the journey with him

died in the struggle to return to their camp. Overcome by exhaustion, lack of food and intense cold, they stumbled on till they had no strength to go any farther.

Roald Amundsen was not the man to rest content with the fame of being the first explorer to sail through the North-West Passage and the first to reach the South Pole. Soon after his return from the Antarctic he was making plans for a new expedition. Once again he planned to explore the North Polar region. Just as his plans were nearly complete in August 1914 war broke out, and for several years Polar exploration could not be thought of.

At last in 1918 Amundsen once again left Norway in a new ship which he himself had designed for polar exploration and which he had christened *Maud* in honour of the Queen of Norway. His aim was to drift across the Arctic Ocean to the North Pole. But the ocean currents proved to be too uncertain and the *Maud* was stuck fast in the ice throughout two winters before the attempt to reach the North Pole was given up. Instead she made the North-West Passage to Alaska.

By this time Amundsen was filled with a new ambition—to explore the Arctic by air. With an American explorer named Lincoln Ellsworth he made several



AN AIRSHIP

unsuccessful attempts to fly across the Polar sea. At last in May 1926 they took off from Spitsbergen in the Italian airship Norge flown by Colonel Nobile and reached the North Pole in sixteen hours. Thirty hours later they arrived at Point Barrow in Alaska. This was two days after the American Admiral Byrd had made the first flight to the Pole.

Two years later—in 1928—news reached Norway that the airship Italia, in which General Nobile was attempting to repeat the flight across the Pole, was missing. At once Amundsen volunteered to go in search of the missing explorer. He left Tromsö by seaplane on 18th June and was never heard of again. His death in the attempt to save a fellow explorer was a noble end to a great life.

A NOTE ON THE POLES

THE earth spins round on its axis. The axis is an imaginary line, the ends of which are called the North and South Poles.

When the needle of a compass, swinging free, comes to rest, its ends point one to the North Magnetic Pole, the other to the South Magnetic Pole. These poles do not correspond exactly with the true poles, and their position changes slowly from year to year.

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